



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Food and  
Nutrition  
Service

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**MEMO CODE:** SP 19-2008

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**SUBJECT:** Technical Assistance in Preparation for CRE

**TO:** Regional Directors  
Special Nutrition Programs  
All Regions

State Directors  
Child Nutrition Programs  
All States

Part 210.18 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) describes the administrative review process for the Child Nutrition Programs, otherwise known as the Coordinated Review Effort (CRE). The purpose of the CRE is to ensure that school children are offered meals that meet regulatory standards, and to ensure that the financial claims associated with those meals are appropriate. FNS encourages State agencies (SAs) to work with School Food Authorities (SFAs) on an ongoing basis to improve SFAs' compliance with all Federal regulations surrounding the service of meals at school.

While ongoing technical assistance is strongly encouraged, this technical assistance should not be provided in a targeted way which undermines the CRE process. Recently, FNS has noted that it is becoming increasingly common to conduct "practice CREs" or "technical assistance reviews" within SFAs shortly before the formal CRE is scheduled. These visits are intended to reduce documented findings and subsequent corrective action stemming from the actual review.

While taking fiscal action is not a primary goal of FNS, the monetary tool is an important one in securing compliance with Federal regulations. Ensuring the accuracy of meal claims is especially timely after the recent release of the Access, Participation, Eligibility and Certification (APEC) study, which indicates that erroneous payments in the school meal programs totaled \$935 million in certification errors and \$860 million in non-certification errors in SY 2005-06 alone. Conducting a practice CRE to temporarily reduce the likelihood of documenting findings undermines the integrity of the review process; diminishes the importance of adhering to program requirements; does little to dissuade improper or incorrect administration of the Child Nutrition Programs; and reduces the efficiency of already limited oversight resources.

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Consequently, we have determined that “practice reviews” are in direct conflict with the NSLP/SBP review requirements and may not be conducted. Technical assistance efforts must be intended to improve program performance, not to target and prevent potential review findings prior to conducting a scheduled administrative (CRE) review. Thank you for your cooperation.

**Original Signed**

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Director  
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